Circular sent out by Scott & Phillips
Boston April 16. 1839

Dear Sir,

We think it due to the Anti-Slavery cause, that its friends generally attend the meeting of the National and State Societies. But, at the present time, we think there are special reasons why the tried and true friends of the cause, who are anxious to maintain its original principles, should attend the Anniversary of the American Anti-Slavery Society, in New-York, on Tuesday the 7th day of May next.

We are informed from such a source that we have no doubt of its correctness, that certain individuals in this city & State, intend to move, at the New-York meeting, to amend the Constitution of the American Society, by striking from it the following clauses "While it (the Society) admits that each State in which Slavery exists has, by the constitution of the United States, the exclusive right to legislate in regard to its [Slavery's] abolition in the States &c" — "The Society will also endeavour in a constitutional way to influence Congress to put an end to the domestic Slave-trade, and to abolish Slavery in all those portions of our common country, which come under its control, especially in the District of Columbia, and likewise to prevent the extension of it to any State that may be hereafter admitted to the Union". Should they be unsuccessful in this, they propose to move to strike out the following clause "This Society will never, in any way, countenance the oppressed in

vindicating their rights by resorting to physical force."
If successful in the first particular the result would
be, to make the Society emphatically a "non-government"
association. If this failed, and success crowned the
effort in the second particular it would be to
withdraw the guarantee solemnly given at the outset,
that we would not excite or countenance insurrection
among the slaves.

We will not stop to speak of the motives
which may and probably do influence the movers in
this matter. but will simply state, that, should they succeed
in either of these attempts, it would result in the
speedy destruction of the Anti Slavery Society, if not of the
Anti Slavery cause. Should the Constitution be altered in
either of these fundamental points, it will destroy the
confidence of the community in our integrity and
stability, and will assuredly result in driving from
the Society all such men as Arthur Tappan, Wm. Jay,
J. Leavitt, J. G. Whittier, Wm. Goodell, J. G. Birney, Lakey
Sunderland, Alvan Stuart, T. D. Weld, — in short, every
man who believes in the propriety of governmental
action for the removal of Slavery and the necessity of
pacific assurance to the community that the Society
will not countenance insurrections. In a word the
Anti Slavery association will be in pieces.

We do not say that the bringing forward of these propositions has been finally & absolutely determined on. We only know that it has been a matter of deliberation — that at least one prominent individual at least has said that they would be brought forward, & that we have reason to believe that another individual is now visiting different parts of the Country to secure the attendance of persons at the Annual Meeting who will favor these or similar projects. And we believe that nothing will prevent the bringing forward of such propositions and the success of one or the other, but the prompt and

and general attendance of those who are satisfied with our Constitution, and wish it to remain substantially as it is. Such should let no small consideration prevent their attendance on the occasion alluded to. Indeed should the attempts to which we have adverted not be made, we have no doubt from recent movements in this State that questions will come up whose decision will decide the fate of our present organizations. We see not under existing circumstances how this can be avoided. We trust you will not fail to be present, and to urge others who are determined to maintain the integrity of the cause to accompany you. Does not the crisis demand it? Do you not owe it to the slave?

A. A. Phelps.
Orange Scott

P.S. The Board of the State society have appointed several women as delegates. That will bring up the woman question.

MS. A. 21. 9 pt. A .76